3:Stern E-4,5 (1949-1957) 1965 NR 10 Klamath NR 10

[Klamath Reservation]

EIGHT

[P.105]

School

WHILE THE RE-EDUCATION OF THEIR ELDERS WAS BEING CARRIED OUT, it was the youth of the reservation on whom the Agents placed their ultimate hopes. The American faith in the transforming powers of education is nowhere clearer than in the words of Dyar:

> Being fully convinced that a radical change in the Indian character can only be wrought in childhood and early youth, I would most respectfully urge the co-operation of the Government in the prosecution of this work of taking the children from their native haunts of degradation, and clothing, feeding, and teaching them the habits and arts of civilization.[1]

It had been a slow start. Lindsay Applegate had employed a teacher, but as that functionary observed, he had been "instructed to labor on the farms and to give instructions to certain Indians in manual labor"—evidently not his metier.[2] The "sickly effort" as A. B. Meacham termed it, was abandoned,[3] and not until 1873 did Dyar's plan for a manual training boarding school bear fruit.[4] It met initial opposition. John Meacham had advocated the hiring of a "good reliable educated Indian" as teacher who "would himself be a living example of the result to be achieved by study. . . ."[5] Such a person might also have been able to reduce the initial aversion of parents to sending their children to school. Dyar noted, "I shall be obliged to commence with a very few—perhaps with orphans who have no friends to oppose." However, he wisely declined to use force.[6] In his efforts he was to have the steadfast support of Henry Blow, who became head chief in 1874. "Mr. Dyar . . . says," wrote Nickerson, "that he never could have established the school on this reservation, had it not been for him. He was its friend when all others were against it."[7]

Soon Dyar had over twenty scholars,[8] only to have to close

3:Stern E-4,5 (1949-1957) 1965 NR 10 Klamath NR 10

[Klamath Reservation]

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down for lack of appropriated funds. Thereupon he set the teacher to giving general instruction to the Indian women in such subjects as housekeeping and sewing.[9]

After writing to Senator John H. Mitchell, Dyar was pleased to see the school reopen and soon had it running as a boarding school,[10] and was hoping for a similar school at Yainax. He still drew primarily upon the children of Agency employees: in a letter to Oliver Applegate, traveling with Meacham's lyceum tour in 1875, he reported: ". . . commenced school with Dave [Hill]'s and Tecumseh's children and a few others in attendence [sic]. . . ."[11] Elsewhere, he encountered considerable opposition, but stoutly maintained, "when they come in from the wokus grounds and settle down again in their winter homes I shall gather in more scholars."[12] Absenteeism plagued him. "[It] requires constant vigilance," he wrote "and sometimes the exercise of authority to prevent the children from leaving, or the parents from drawing them away as the time comes when they are in the habit of roving around after roots, etc."[13]

The erratic attendance made for disappointingly slow progress. Reported Roork:

> Many have gained a knowledge of the beginning of reading, while very few are found who read fluently in the third reader. This comes from their naturally unsettled character; they cannot be forced to stay in school, and many only just get ready to learn when they leave, thus making progress difficult though the numbers of scholars in attendance is about on an average.[14]

Nickerson, even while reporting the expansion of the school to two departments and fifty students, found himself forced to add, "the teaching of about one half of them in attendance is confined to the primer and first reader and primary speller."[15]

Nonetheless, there was a waiting list of would-be scholars, and by 1883 a second boarding school had been opened at Yainax. Students at both the Agency and Yainax schools devoted the mornings to studies and the afternoons to work under an industrial teacher. Boys were taught farming, cultivating the school garden, stock raising and dairying; they worked in the sawmill, and helped the carpenter, blacksmith, and wagon- and plowmaker. They also cut cordwood for the school. Girls learned clothes-making and housekeeping.[16]

3:Stern E-4,5 (1949-1957) 1965 NR 10 Klamath NR 10

[Klamath Reservation]

An apprenticeship system had earlier been set up, with an Indian assigned to each artisan as assistant and understudy. Nickerson noted in 1882 that while "[the apprentices] are doing as well as uneducated Indians can be expected to do, not one of them . . . has had any school training, and but one can write his name."[17] Presently schoolboys began to take over some of these positions.

Many factors bore upon the effectiveness of the teaching. Elderly individuals today can recall the first bewildered days at school—sometimes relieved by the kindness of such teachers as one nicknamed by the children "Hummingbird"—but at best it was a difficult experience. "Nine tenths of them," wrote Emery of the newcomers, "know nothing of [English]. At first, when called to recite, they will dart under the seats, and have to be coaxed and helped from their hiding places by the hand of the teacher."[18] Not always was such tenderness displayed. Although one man, now deceased, recalled a generally pleasant experience and the kindnesses of matrons and teachers,[19] a contemporary bitterly recollected:

> In school they didn't allow us to talk in Klamath. We were punished if they caught us talking in Klamath. They would make us hold up a stick with our hands high. Sometimes they would make an older boy hold a fence rail on his back and walk around a tree stump. Sometimes one whole hour at a time. I never had to do that. Sometimes I would see the teacher or principal whip a boy with a good-sized willow. Sometimes they would make the boy take off his shirt and then the boy would never get over it. I felt that sometimes we boys should get together and give the teacher a whipping to see how he liked it. In the old Klamath days, the parents would switch the child on the legs or sometimes on his butt, but never that way—hard like that. . . .
>
> At school I had it pretty tough. I was cold and hungry. When we made noise at table, we had to be punished without any food. I had to take food from the table. Fish at night. The children had to steal apples.

Detailed as meatcutter, he recalls that the choicest cuts went to employees, the necks and ribs to the children. And he concludes, "I learned how to steal at school to keep from going hungry."[20]

There were games and ice skating, and the brass band. For the adolescents there were illicit sexual adventures. Some children

3:Stern E-4,5 (1949-1957) 1965 NR 10 Klamath NR 10

[Klamath Reservation]

first encountered Christianity at the school. There were studies, though the most lasting impressions were made in references to Indian wars in the histories.[21] Above all there was the heavy labor, for the development of the industrial program coincided with the period when able-bodied men were leaving the reservation on passes to work for whites; and the support not only of the schools but in some measure of other Agency programs devolved upon the scholars. As E. L. Applegate admitted, "the truth is, the labor is very heavy upon those old enough or intelligent enough to render any assistance; 110 people [in the school] constitute a large family."[22] Work on the school farm required the pupils to return in two-week shifts over the summer. A contest for control over this work force developed between Applegate and the Superintendent of the Agency school, who presumed to take his orders directly from the Superintendent of Indian Schools in Washington.[23]

There was competition from off-reservation schools over the older students. In 1881, Nickerson, perhaps prodded from above, had attempted to send twelve superior students to the Indian school at Forest Grove—later removed to Chemawa, Oregon—but funds were not available to send them the 450 miles distant.[24] In a letter from Acting Commissioner E. L. Stevens, the role of those schools and their competition with Agency schools are clearly acknowledged. Declared Stevens:

> It is not the policy of this office to remove pupils from reservation to distant boarding schools without the consent of their parents.
>
> It is always the case that the removal from agency schools of the older and more intelligent pupils is, temporarily at least, a detriment to the schools; but it is believed that the superior advantages which can be had away from the Indian country, and the reflex influence on the families who thus commit themselves to civilization, more than compensate to the tribe for the loss occasioned to the schools.[25]

In 1885, accordingly, nineteen students were sent away to school, and by spring, five had died. Eventually eight were dead, and Emery wrote, "This great mortality has caused much dissatisfaction among my Indians; and any effort to remove any more children to this School will meet with serious opposition on

Individuated family relationships and the instability of the marriage tie have other ramifications. Parental care-taking activities are minimal and are sometimes non-existent. Given the pattern of drinking and partying, children are frequently abandoned to the care of a hired baby-sitter for days at a time, or to an older relative, or to an elder sibling. If the party occurs in the household, children may temporarily be moved elsewhere, or they may simply be left to shift for themselves. Thus at crucial developmental stages children may find their identification with parents broken by alternating periods of presence and absence, and their affections given over to an older sister (the picture of the determined little twelve or thirteen year old "child-nurse" is a clear one) or to a grandmother. When parents are present, Klamath children are usually faced not only with minimal care and attention, but with indifference and aloofness. The father especially is dissociated from significant relationships, and both he and the mother are frequently given to unpredictable and alternating fits of love and anger. Thus within the nuclear family, there is little experience with consistency in role relationships.

Thus the first years of life are spent by the Klamath child in a loosely bonded, amorphous household group, and he has some lesser, but important ties to other kin. At age six the Klamath child attends a local public school. Reflecting the incohesiveness of the family group, these children are accustomed to lax, permissive controls of their behavior, and are not accustomed to confronting clear cut, specific, over-riding standards of conduct. At the same time they are not accustomed to maneuvering opposite a single, stable authority figure. Yet these children are characterized also by a dependent craving for affection and attention which does, initially, facilitate adjustment to the school milieu. In contrast, they frequently anticipate rebuff. In later years the latter seems to be the stronger inter-personal need, and the growing child becomes increasingly characterized by a kind of defensive isolation from close personal contacts. This may be adequate training for participation in contemporary Klamath culture, but it hampers and restricts adaptation to the larger society.

In many respects the values and skills learned within the household to not adequately prepare the child even for school adjustment, with the requirement of regularity and time-mindedness. Similarly, the daily routine within the household may be such as to impede the child's getting to school on time, or it may throw the responsibility for attendance on very young children, or it may get him there unfed and, by school standards, improperly clothed. At the same time the child may have had recited for him, or he has surely overheard recounted, the myth of Klamath racial inferiority. Too frequently this belief in inferiority is assimilated as a segment of the growing child's self system, contributing in turn to his acceptance of poor performance, to a bitter rebelliousness, or to a destructive pride. The same experience reinforces the expectation of rebuff, if this time somewhat more consciously. In fact, in later school years the Klamath adolescent does meet with informal racial barriers in the areas of courtship and dating, for the path to inter-marriage with local Whites is not an easy one.

It is at this juncture, in early adolescence, that parental controls of the child are almost totally relinquished. Made thus culturally independent, the child may then enter high school and find that for the first time he has to compete with his peers, for there are few social promotions in high school. Because he is fully aware of his economic independence, and because of the other factors cited, the pattern is for Klamath children then to find themselves propelled into an adult status. The associated school phenomena at this juncture is a high

Sparrow: Male, Age 63

Background Data

*159 [156] Sparrow's case is cited because of his position on the lowest rung of the local status hierarchy. He is known as a happy-go-lucky, worthless old drunk and is generally considered as "lacking a few of his marbles." However, Sparrow is *387 seldom publicly disparaged, for local citizens simply pay little attention to [401] him. He has a sixth grade education, gained at the Agency school. He has [434] apparently never worked consistently at any job, and most of his work experience has been as a farm or ranch laborer. He is and has for years been totally dependent upon per capita income and the income from ranch lands owned by his mother, with whom he lives. Their affairs are managed by a local businessman who some years ago was appointed their guardian. He is the second eldest of four siblings. After his father's death forty years ago, his mother remarried and bore two other [58] children. He was married once when a young man, and after four years divorced [164] his wife because of "her shiftless ways." He is a semi-invalid, the result of [191] an accident years ago when a drunken brother drove over him with a truck, crushing his pelvis. He speaks fluent Klamath, the result of constant association with his aged mother who represents a direct link with the aboriginal Klamath past, as well as adequate English, learned in school.

[733] Much of Sparrow's time is spent in jail for drunkenness, in the local tavern, with one of the drinking cliques, or passed out in a doorway. When he is not totally drunk he spends much of his time with his mother, for whom he cares in his fashion. Occasionally he goes fishing in a nearby river. For at least twenty five years, this has been the pattern of his activities.

*159 Sparrow has many skills, among the most striking of which is the ability to 154 "fly from here to the Agency without once touching the ground." There are several dimensions to this delusion, one of which is an association, in Sparrow's thinking, with the acquisition of power. When a young man he dreamed of acquiring the power to "rise up off the ground, like Jesus Christ." While such a belief may have aboriginal correlates, there are no Klamath today who would accept it as valid. Sparrow keeps this secret to himself, and relates it only to strangers and transients from whom he intends to borrow money. His other skills include the following: the ability to keep house and cook, harness making, leather working, painting, canning food (the notion involves laying in stores for the winter), tanning buckskin, wood carving, carpentry, poetry composition (in Klamath), arrowhead making, making traditional basketry, stock raising, restaurant management, and finally, the ability to bewitch rich old white ladies, who are captivated by him and who drive him about in their white Cadillacs. The latter may be associated with a recurrent dream of meeting with a white buffalo, also a symbol of power, but it is difficult to say, for there were never any buffalo near the Klamath, and it is more likely that he has got this idea from reading western stories. Needless to say, most of these skills are quite delusional also. There is no evidence for any of them being more than this. Relating one or more of these is Sparrow's single style of interacting with others, for in reaction to a question or another's anecdote he will sift about in his memory until he comes up with one of his capacities which seems relevant. Very frequently, the writer could not see where or how they were appropriate, but for Sparrow there seemed to be some connection. He relates these matter of factly, with only the most slight suggestion that they were self-enhancing, and no indication that he meant to justify himself, and will then coyly watch his listener to see if he is properly impressed. This behavior tends to merge with Sparrow's